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TRIBUTE TO CORN.

By Governor Richard J. Oglesby.

The following address was delivered before the Fellowship Club in Chicago, September 9, 1892, on the occasion of the Harvest Home Festival. So many requests have been made for copies of it that we give it in full.

Governor Oglesby sat between Joseph Jefferson and Conan Doyle at the speaker's table.

The corn! the corn! the corn! that in its first beginning and in its growth has furnished aptest illustration of the tragic announcement of the chiefest hope of man. If he die he shall surely live again. Planted in the friendly but sombre bosom of Mother Earth, it dies. Yea, it dies the second death, surrendering up each trace of form and earthly shape until the outward tide is stopped by the reacting vital germ, which, breaking all the bonds and cerements of its sad decline, comes bounding, laughing into life and light, the fittest of all the symbols that make certain promise of the fate of man. And so it died, and then it lived again.

And so my people died. By some unknown, uncertain and unfriendly fate I found myself making my first journey into life from conditions as lowly as those surrounding that awakening, dying, living infant germ. It was in those days when I, a simple boy, had wandered from Indiana to Springfield that I there met the father of this good man—Joseph Jefferson—whose kind and gentle words to me were as water to a thirsty soul—as the shadow of a rock to a weary man. I loved him then; I love his distinguished son now. Two full generations have been taught by his gentleness and smiles, and tears

have quickly answered to the command of his artistic mind. Long may he live to make us laugh and cry, cry and laugh by turns, as he may choose to move us.

But now again my mind turns to the glorious corn. See it! Look in its ripening, waving field! See how it wears a crown, prouder than monarch ever wore; sometimes jauntily and sometimes after the storm the dignified survivors of the tempest seem to view a field of slaughter and to pity a fallen foe. And see the pendant caskets of the corn field filled with the wine of life and see the silken fringes that set a form, for fashion and for art.

And now the evening comes, and something of a time to rest and listen. The scudding clouds conceal the half and then reveal the whole of the moonlit beauty of the night; and then the gentle winds make heavenly harmonies on a thousand, thousand harps that hang upon the borders, and the edges, and the middle of the field of ripening corn, until my heart seems to beat responsive with the rising and the falling of the long, melodious refrain. The melancholy clouds sometimes make shadows on the field and hide its aureat wealth; and now they move, and slowly into sight there comes the golden glow of promise for an industrious land.

Aye, the corn, the royal corn, within whose yellow hearts there is of health and strength for all the nations. The corn triumphant! That with the aid of man hath made victorious procession across the tufted plain and laid foundations for the social excellence that is and is to be. This glorious plant, transmitted by the alchemy of God, sustains the warrior in battle, the poet in song and strengthens everywhere the thousand arms that work the purposes of life. Oh! that I had the voice of song or skill to translate into tones the harmonies, and symphonies, and oratorios that roll across my soul when standing sometimes by day and sometimes by night upon the borders of the verdant sea I note a world of promise;

and then before one-half the year is gone I view its full fruition and see its heaped gold await the need of man.

Majestic, fruitful, wondrous plant! Thou greatest among the manifestations of the wisdom and the love of God that may be seen in all the fields, or upon the hillsides, or in the valleys. Glorious corn that, more than all the sisters of the field, wears tropic garments. Nor on the shore of Nilus nor of Ind does nature dress her forms more splendidly. My God! To live again that time, when half the world was good and the other half unknown!

And now again the corn! That in its kernel holds the strength that shall (in the body of the man refreshed) subdue the forest and compel response from every stubborn field; or, shining in the eye of beauty, make blossoms of her cheeks and jewels of her lips, and thus make for man the greatest inspiration to well doing, the hope of companionship of that sacred, warm and well-embodied soul—a woman.